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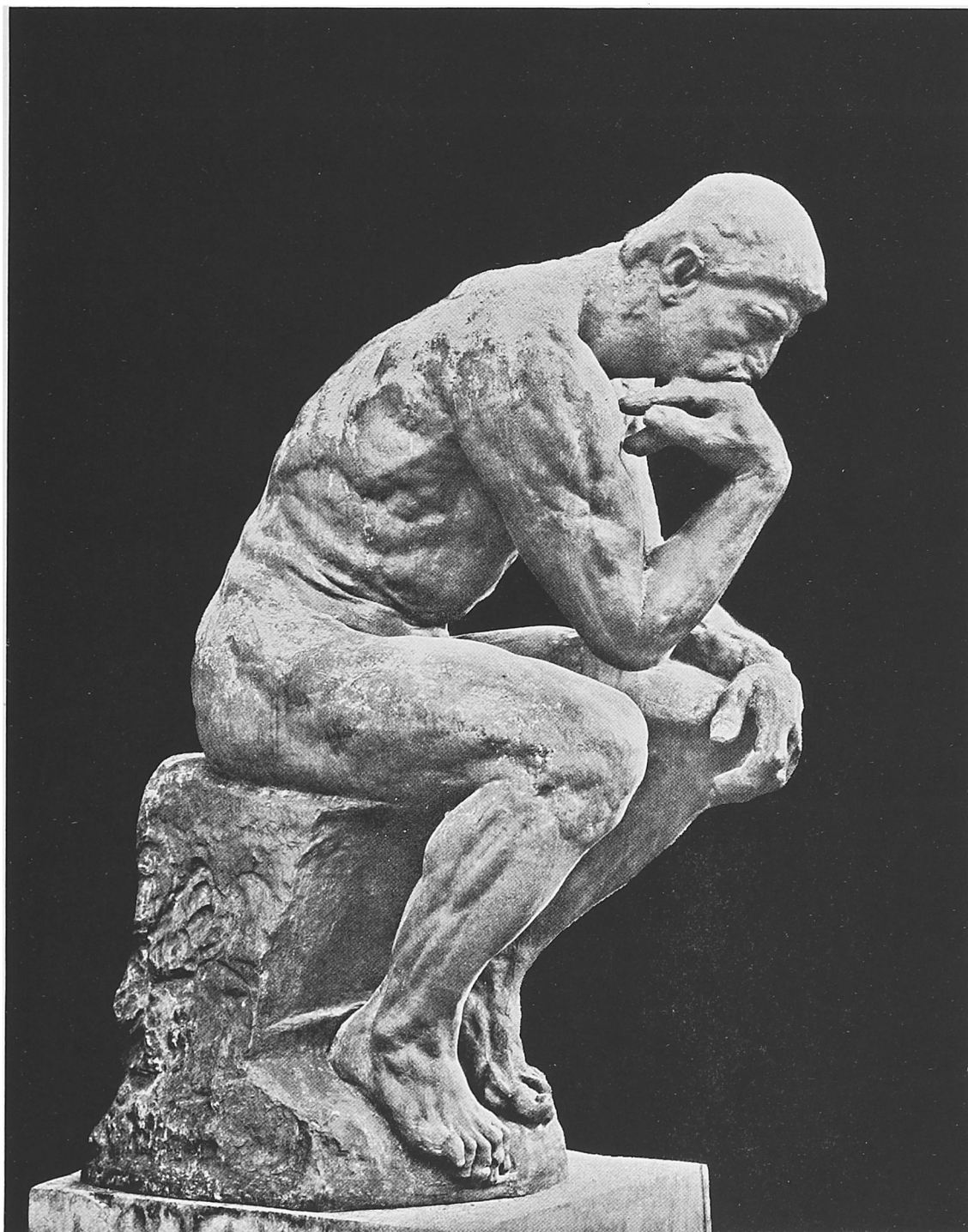
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"THE THINKER" by AUGUSTE RODIN

THE THINKER

Written after seeing Rodin's statue, "The Thinker," a crouched but awakening figure—the stunned and stolid Hoe-Man beginning at last to think.

By EDWIN MARKHAM

Author of "The Man with the Hoe" and Other Poems.

I

Behold, this time-scarred Titan is
The man come down from centuries—
Forever beaten as the ox,
Forever silent as the rocks.

Behold, for Thought begins to stir
This brain that was a sepulcher.
Behold, this void abyss of night
Struck by a timid beam of light—
This terror-shape, all brute and brawn,
This deep of darkness toucht with dawn.
A star breaks on the chaos—lo,
The Shapes of Night begin to go!

II

Behold, O world, the Toiling Man,
Breaking at last the ancient ban;
For more than Eden's curse was his—
Mind-darkened down the centuries.
But after ages of blind toil,
Ages that made his soul the spoil
Of tyrants and of traitors—see,
He ponders . . . and the world is free!
Hark, for his awful questions throng
To thunder against the ancient wrong:
"Why am I bent with brutal loads?
Why am I driven on all roads:
Where is the laughter and the light
To cheer the workman in his might?
Why should my Godlike toil destroy
My world of beauty and of joy?
Why, since I feed the mouths of all,
Have I the careless crumbs that fall?
Why with these labor-blasted hands
Am I left homeless in all lands?
Why is the one that builds the world
Left as a dog in kennel curled?
Why is the one that beautifies
The kingdoms, robbed of seeing eyes?
Why am I hurled thru hells of war,
I who have nothing to battle for?
Why should I fight for lords, indeed,
I who have only mouths to feed—
I who am only the earth's old slave,
Whose only gain would be a grave!"

September 10, 1916

III

Behold, O world, the Toiler thinks!
Now these old questions of the Sphinx
Will have their answers. In this pause
Are epochs, institutions, laws—
The fall of Anarchy and Chance;
The crumble of Brute Circumstance;
The building of the Comrade State,
To be a new benignant Fate;
The rise of Beauty to her throne
When she shall make all hearts her own.

Chained to the earth his body seems,
And yet his soul rides forth on dreams!
Tyrants, beware, for there is might
In dreams to shake the pillared night,
A power more potent to compel
Than all the dark decrees of Hell.
He ponders, and the moment awes;
For the world's fate is in that pause.
All destinies are in that hush;
For in it is the power to crush
All the old battlements of wrong
And build the world in comrade song.
Ages the Night was round him furled:
Behold the Morning of the World!

IV

Tyrants, the morning is your doom:
Day yawns about you as a tomb:
Day is your cavern of the night:
Flee, then, before the coming light!
Flee, flee: this is the Toiler's hour:
Behold God coming down in power!
Wrongs wither in the fire of Thought—
All of the hells that War has wrought,
All of the splendor Greed has built,
All of the grandeur and the guilt,
All of the battle-lust and crime
That redden down the roads of time.

Tyrants, the Tools begin to think:
Now all your lawless thrones will sink,
And a new world will softly rise
With laughter and with lyric cries.
Thought is God's thunder at the gate,
The Rhadamantine voice of Fate.
To-day is judgment day: awake,
Upstart, O toiling millions, break
The shackles, lift the flag unfurled,
Rise, outcast monarchs of the world!

Edwin Markham